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Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I am very pleased to be here and join my colleagues from Minnesota. I want to thank my colleague from North Carolina for his kind remarks as well.

Like the mighty Mississippi River, the tradition and pride of the Minnesota National Guard is long and deep. For 150 years Minnesotans have proudly taken their places in that long line of citizen soldiers, that long line that has never failed us.

Much has been said already today and I will try not to be redundant, but I do want to share some of the history of this very historical Guard. As has been mentioned, they were organized before Minnesota even became a State. Now, 150 years is a long time and many things have changed in our State, in our Nation, in our world. But there has been one constant, and that is the professionalism and the sense of service that we take for granted from our own National Guard.

As was mentioned, in April of 1861, it just so happened that the Governor of the State of Minnesota, Governor Ramsey, was here in Washington, D.C. on other business when we heard of the firing on Fort Sumter. And President Lincoln put out a call for troops, and Governor Ramsey became the first Governor in the Union to rush over to the White House and volunteer troops to serve to defend the Union. And it then fell upon the Minnesota 1st Infantry to be the first regiments volunteered to serve in that battle for the Union. And the story has been told that when they marched off to war, they were 1,066 strong, but by the end of the day of fighting of July 2, 1863, only 47 could answer the call. They suffered on the late afternoon of July 2, 1863, the highest percentage of casualties of any unit that fought in that tragic war. But they held the line that day. And to this day many people believe that they deserve to be called the saviors of our country because of their sacrifices.

Many years later the colonel who led that regiment, Colonel William Colville, was asked what he thought about as they charged down that hill that day, and he said, "Gad, I thought of Washington." They knew what the stakes were, and they knew that they had to hold that line.

Earlier in the day that pivotal battle was fought, General Hancock rolled by and he asked Colonel Colville, "How long can you hold your position?"

And he responded with a sentence which made military and political history and survives to this day as the motto of the 1st Infantry. He said, "General, to the last man." And as we know, it became no idle boast.

Since the Civil War, the Minnesota National Guard has honorably served in the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Operation Desert Shield, Desert Storm. These soldiers helped defend the border against Pancho Villa and maintain the peace in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo.

Today more than 600 National Guardsmen from Minnesota have been deployed to Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom. More than 2,600 Minnesota citizen soldiers are serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In January I saw firsthand the courage and dedication of the Minnesota National Guard at Camp Shelby. Awaiting their deployment to Iraq, these volunteer men and women maintain the historic spirit and tradition of the Minnesota National Guard.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise in support of this resolution, and I congratulate and recognize the Minnesota National Guard's 150 years of dedicated service. Because of their sacrifices, our Nation and our State are more secure and millions around the world can look forward to a future of peace and freedom.